Amendments to Claims

Claims 1-121, 132-137, 141-145 and 148-150 (Cancelled).

Claim 151 (New). A method of fulfilling an information need based on documents and an index stored on a computer-readable medium comprising the steps of:

receiving a query containing a word and a symbol that matches any term;

identifying one or more documents in the index containing the word;

locating one or more different terms at the location of the symbol in the query within the identified one or more documents; and

ranking the located one or more different terms using a metric related to the number of times in all of the identified documents the one or more terms was located.

Claim 152 (New). The method of claim 1 wherein the index identifies documents that contain the word.

Claim 153 (New). The method of claim 1 wherein the documents are accessible on the internet.

Claim 154 (New). The method of claim 1 wherein the documents comprise worldwide web pages.

Claim 155 (New). The method of claim 1 wherein the metric is the number of times the one or more terms was located in all of the identified documents.

Claim 156 (New). The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of outputting the ranked one or more different terms.

Claim 157 (New). The method of claim 156 further comprising the step of outputting identifiers or locations of the documents that contain the word.

Claim 158 (New). The method of claim 157 wherein the identifiers or location of a document comprises a uniform resource locator.

Claim 159 (New). The method of claim 1 wherein the symbol includes a restriction that comprises a morphological feature.

Claim 160 (New). The method of claim 1 wherein the symbol includes a restriction that comprises a syntactic feature.

Claim 161 (New). The method of claim 1 wherein the symbol includes a restriction that comprises a computer program.

Claim 162 (New). The method of claim 1 wherein the index includes locations of terms within the documents.

Claim 163 (New). The method of claim 162 wherein the locating step comprises:

determining the location of a term in the query within a document using the index; and

locating a term based on the location of the term within the document.

Claim 164 (New). The method of claim 1 wherein the metric is based on the content of a plurality of documents identified in the identifying step.

Claim 165 (New). The method of claim 1 wherein the metric is based on the location of the term within a document, a weight assigned to the document that includes the term, the age of a document that contains the term, the source of the document that contains the term, or a format feature of a term within a document.

Claim 166 (New). A method of fulfilling an information need based on contexts in documents and an index stored on a computer readable medium comprising the steps of:

receiving a query containing a word and a symbol that matches any term;

identifying one or more documents having a context containing the word;

locating one or more different terms at the location of the symbol in the query within the identified one or more contexts within the documents; and

ranking the located one or more different terms using a metric related to the number of times in all of the identified documents the one or more terms was located.

Claim 167 (New). The method of claim 166 further including storing contexts for terms wherein a context occurs in a document.

Claim 168 (New). The method of claim 167 wherein the storing step comprises storing, for a plurality of contexts, a finite state automaton that represents the context.

Claim 169 (New). A method of fulfilling an information need comprising the steps of:

storing contexts in which terms occur;

receiving a query wherein the query comprises a term;

locating, within the stored context, information related to the term thereby identifying information to fulfill the need; and

ranking the information resulting from the query in accordance with a frequency of the information within one or more contexts.

Claim 170 (New). Computer-executable process steps stored on a computer-readable medium, the computer-executable process steps to fulfill an information need based on documents and an index also stored on a computer-readable medium, the computer-executable process steps comprising:

code to receive a query containing a word and a symbol that matches any term;

code to identify one or more documents in the index containing the word;

code to locate one or more different terms at the location of the symbol in the query within the identified one or more documents; and

code to rank the located one or more different terms using a metric related to the number of times in all of the identified documents the one or more terms was located.